

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims and add new Claims 23 to 28 as shown below.

The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An image input apparatus comprising:

reading means for reading an encryption key stored in an external source;

storage means for storing said read encryption key to execute an encryption process;

encryption means for encrypting digital information with ~~by using~~ said encryption key stored in the storage means;

output means for outputting the encrypted digital information; ~~and~~

erasing means for erasing said encryption key stored in said storage means after encrypting the digital information by said encryption means ~~and before outputting the encrypted digital information by said output means;~~

input means for inputting digital information encrypted with said encryption key stored in said external source;

obtaining means for obtaining, from said external source, a decryption key corresponding to said encryption key; and

decryption means for decrypting the input encrypted digital information by using said decryption key obtained by said obtaining means.

2. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption means encrypts the digital information which has undergone a high-efficiency coding operation.

3. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising image pick-up means for optically picking up an image of a subject and for generating an image signal from the picked-up image.

4. and 5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a common key cryptosystem.

7. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public key cryptosystem.

8. and 9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) An image input method for an image input apparatus, comprising the steps of:

reading an encryption key stored in an external source;

storing said encryption key in a storage means to execute an encryption process;

encrypting digital information ~~by using~~ with said encryption key stored in the storage means;

outputting the encrypted digital information; ~~and~~

erasing said stored encryption key after encrypting the digital information by the encrypting step ~~and before outputting the encrypted digital information by the outputting step;~~

inputting digital information encrypted with said encryption key stored in said external source;

obtaining, from said external source, a decryption key corresponding to said encryption key; and

decrypting the input encrypted digital information by using said decryption key obtained in the obtaining step.

11. (Original) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein the digital information which has undergone a high-efficiency coding operation is encrypted.

12. (Previously Presented) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein an image signal is generated from an optically picked up image of a subject which is converted into the digital information.

13. (Original) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on one of a common key cryptosystem and a public key cryptosystem.

14. (Currently Amended) An encryption processing program stored in a computer-readable medium, the program to be executed by an image input apparatus, comprising:

a step of reading an encryption key stored in an external source;
a step of storing said encryption key in a storage means to execute an encryption process;
a step of encrypting digital information ~~by using~~ with said encryption key stored in the storage means;
a step of outputting the encrypted digital information; ~~and~~
a step of erasing the stored encryption key after the step of encrypting the digital information ~~and before the step of outputting said encrypted digital information;~~
a step of inputting digital information encrypted with said encryption key stored in said external source;
a step of obtaining, from said external source, a decryption key corresponding to said encryption key ; and
a step of decrypting said input encrypted digital information by using said decryption key obtained in the obtaining step.

15. to 17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) An image input apparatus comprising:
generating means for generating an internal key;
information encryption means for encrypting digital information with said
~~by using an internal encryption~~ key;
reading means for reading ~~obtaining means for obtaining~~ an external encryption key stored in an external source;

storage means for storing said external encryption key to execute a key encryption process;

key encryption means for encrypting said internal ~~encryption~~ key with by ~~using~~ said external encryption key stored in said storage means;

output means for outputting the encrypted digital information and the encrypted internal ~~encryption~~ key; and

erasing means for erasing said external encryption key and ~~stored in~~ said ~~storage means after encrypting said internal encryption key after executing said key by said~~ key encryption means ~~and before outputting process by~~ said ~~encrypted digital~~ information and the encrypted internal encryption means and said key encryption by said ~~output~~ means;

input means for inputting encrypted digital information and an encrypted internal key;

obtaining means for obtaining an external decryption key corresponding to said external encryption key stored in said external source;

key decryption means for decrypting said input encrypted internal key with said obtained external decryption key; and

decryption means for decrypting said input encrypted digital information with said internal key decrypted by said key decryption means.

19. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 18, wherein said internal encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a common key cryptosystem, and said external encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public key cryptosystem.

20. (Currently Amended) An image input method for an image input apparatus comprising the steps of:

- generating an internal key;
- encrypting digital information ~~by using an~~ with said internal ~~encryption~~ key;
- reading obtaining an external encryption key stored in an external source;
- storing said external encryption key in a storage means to execute a key encryption process;
- key encrypting said internal ~~encryption~~ key ~~by using~~ with said external encryption key stored in said storage means;
- outputting the encrypted digital information and the encrypted internal ~~encryption~~ key; and
- erasing the ~~stored~~ external encryption key and said ~~after encrypting the~~ internal ~~encryption~~ key after executing said ~~by the key encrypting step and before~~ outputting the encrypted ~~by said~~ digital information encrypting step and the ~~encrypted~~ internal ~~encryption~~ key encrypting by the outputting step;
- inputting encrypted digital information and an encrypted internal key;
- obtaining an external decryption key corresponding to said external encryption key stored in said external source;
- key decrypting said input encrypted internal key with said obtained external decryption key; and
- decrypting said encrypted digital information with said internal key decrypted by the key decrypting step.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) An encryption processing program stored in a computer-readable medium, the program to be executed by an image input

apparatus, comprising the steps of:

a step of generating an internal key;

a step of encrypting digital information ~~by using an~~ with said internal encryption key;

a step of ~~obtaining~~ reading an external encryption key stored in an external source;

a step of storing said external encryption key in a storage means to execute a key encryption process;

a step of key encrypting said internal encryption key ~~by using~~ with said external encryption key stored in said storage means;

a step of outputting the encrypted digital information and the encrypted internal encryption key; and

a step of erasing the ~~stored~~ external encryption key ~~after encrypting~~ and the internal encryption key ~~after executing the~~ by the key encrypting step ~~by the~~ and before outputting the encrypted digital information encrypting step and the encrypted internal encryption key ~~by the outputting~~ encrypting step;

a step of inputting encrypted digital information and an encrypted internal key;

a step of obtaining an external decryption key corresponding to the external encryption key stored in the external source;

a step of key decrypting said input encrypted internal key with said obtained external decryption key; and

a step of decrypting said input encrypted digital information with said internal key decrypted by the key decrypting step.

23. (New) An image input apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the external source comprises an integrated circuit card removably connectable to the image input apparatus and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.

24. (New) An image input method according to Claim 10, wherein the external source comprises a removably connectable integrated circuit card and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.

25. (New) An encryption processing program according to Claim 14, wherein the external source comprises a removably connectable integrated circuit card and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.

26. (New) An image input apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the external source comprises an integrated circuit card removably connectable to the image input apparatus and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.

27. (New) An image input method according to Claim 20, wherein the external source comprises a removably connectable integrated circuit card and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.

28. (New) An encryption processing program according to Claim 22,
wherein the external source comprises a removably connectable integrated circuit card
and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.